



News release

NR/11

31 December 2013

The flooding in Tonbridge and Malling

The flooding emergency over Christmas was a significant event which called for a multi-agency response. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council worked alongside other agencies, each having a clearly defined role in responding to the emergency and supporting our residents.

Nicolas Heslop, Leader of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, said: "I have so much sympathy for the residents and businesses that were flooded on Christmas Eve. For this to occur at any time of the year is distressing but it was compounded by happening at Christmas. I am also aware of the many residents who were without power for some days and this will have been very distressing for them.

"Since Christmas Eve the Emergency Services continue to work tirelessly to help local residents and businesses affected by the severe weather conditions. The Borough Council is working closely with other agencies including Police, Kent Fire & Rescue, the Environment Agency, Kent County Council and a number of other partners and volunteers. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council deployed nearly 100 staff, many coming in whilst on annual leave, running rest centres, giving advice on the telephones, supporting emergency services, updating information on our website and tweeting. In addition a number of our contractors are providing staff and resources to help in the clear up. We supported 44 residents at our rest centres. Many were able to make their way to family and friends but we also helped find temporary accommodation for those with nowhere to go.

"The Council is now helping residents to recover from the flooding by disposing of damaged items, once their insurance companies have given them the go-ahead to do so. However, the high water levels remain an ongoing concern and we remain on alert for potential further flooding."

The roads most affected by the recent flooding have now been identified and the Council has made arrangements for the collection of flood-damaged goods from the affected roads this week:

- Tuesday 31 December:
 - **Tonbridge** - Barden Road, Danvers Road, Avebury Avenue, Holford Street

More follows...

- Friday 3 January:
 - **Hildenborough** - Bramble Close, Copse Road, Brookmead, Birch Close, Hawden Close and Leybank
- Saturday 4 January:
 - **East Peckham** - Old Road, Hale Street and Little Mill

Details of any other properties who report that they need assistance are being collated and the Council will schedule those for collection as soon as possible.

The Council has advised the specific roads in Hildenborough and East Peckham by a leaflet drop on Monday 30 December. Tonbridge roads were advised by leaflet drop on Saturday 28 December.

The schedule will be on the Council's website www.tmbc.gov.uk and "tweeted" on social media.

Residents who have been affected by the flooding may wish to contact the Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS) on 0300 333 5700. If these residents tell the operator that they have been affected by the flooding they will then be dealt with by a dedicated assessor. Further information about KSAS is available on the KCC website www.kcc.gov.uk.

Ends

Notes to editors:

Three photographs are attached to the email showing the Council's refuse and recycling contractor attending flooded properties in Danvers Road, Tonbridge, on Friday 27 December for residents to dispose of flood damaged household items.

Further information:

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council participated in the Gold (strategic planning) and Silver (tactical planning) command briefings arranged by the emergency services throughout 24, 25, and 26 December.

The Council helped 44 people at the Rest Centre in Tonbridge (39 from the borough and 5 from Yalding). Many of them needed a safe place from where they could contact family and friends. Some needed help to get emergency supplies of medication. Others needed emergency accommodation. The Council placed 13 Tonbridge and Malling residents in hotel accommodation and a further 3 residents from Maidstone Borough Council.

More follows...

Monday 23 December

Early liaison with East Peckham Parish Council re flood warning in Little Mill. Sandbags deployed locally.

Tuesday 24 December

Monitored flood alerts on Environment Agency website and via KCC Emergency Planning team.

At 10am the Council deployed Incident Liaison Officers (ILOs) to check out the conditions in East Peckham, Little Mill and Golden Green.

The Council activated their local Control centre mid-afternoon. They opened two Rest Centres as requested by KCC. Rest Centres at East Peckham and Tonbridge were open before dark. (The Rest Centre at East Peckham closed at 11.25pm as there had been no evacuees and supplies were transferred to the Tonbridge Rest Centre.)

The Council also had ILOs on site during the flooding in Tonbridge. They coordinated some of the volunteer 4x4 activity and bus transport in Avebury Avenue to rescue residents from beyond the flood water to the Tonbridge Rest Centre. The Council also assisted KCC highways to close Danvers Road with cones from the parking team.

The Council was advising residents by phone re precautions they should take using EA advice (move things up in house, watch flood alerts, listen to radio, turn power off, move to friends and family if worried, or if they were advised to leave by emergency services). Deployed all sandbags at the Council's disposal and secured additional supply from KCC. Advised residents wishing to arrange their own sandbags.

First residents arrived at Tonbridge Rest Centre at 18.20. Hotel accommodation was arranged for those who needed it at the Premier Inn and the Rose & Crown.

Christmas Day Wednesday 25 December

On the morning of 25 December two Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council staff were dispatched in a Landrover to Yalding at the request of KCC to evacuate stranded residents. However the water was too deep (4 feet) for the Landrover and by then Kent Fire and Rescue were on site utilising a boat to get people out.

Last evacuees arrived at the Tonbridge Rest Centre at 1.20am, Christmas Day morning.

More follows...

In agreement with KCC the Tonbridge Rest Centre was closed at 11.15am and the emergency centre at approx 1.15pm. The Rest Centre kits were left in place as it was anticipated that there would be more flooding during the night of Thursday 26 and the morning of Friday 27 December. Further shifts of emergency staffing were put in place. Fortunately these were not needed.

Boxing Day, Thursday 26 December

Conference call set up for 12 noon. Meteorological Office changed rainfall forecast to min 13mm and max 25mm for early hours Friday. Over 20mm would still have caused flooding so the Council had to prepare for this scenario. Concern was for potentially new evacuees ie those returning home after Christmas to find homes flooded.

Set up rotas for Rest Centre and emergency centre, ILOs etc. This was done on the understanding that there was a probability of more flooding.

Therefore recovery wasn't the Council's main focus on Boxing Day as it would have potentially been overtaken by further flooding. However, Friday's rainfall was minimum level so no more flooding.

The Council began the recovery phase, providing emergency refuse advice and road cleaning to residents in most affected areas, also major street cleansing operation in Tonbridge Town centre. The Council published information on the website. Staff and Councillors visited those areas worst hit.

A community clear up commenced on Friday morning, and the Council attended to give full advice and support by removing some damaged goods on the day.

It is important that residents affected by the flooding consult their insurance companies prior to disposing of damaged goods. The Council is arranging for bulk collections of damaged goods over the coming week. This will allow people to make contact with their insurance companies, and also cater for those who may be returning home after days away from home over Christmas.